Delivering Results

FOR CANADA'S DEFENCE COMMUNITY

Annual Report 2011–2012

Canada

Ombudsman

National Defence and Canadian Forces

Défense nationale et Forces canadiennes

Report of the

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE CANADIAN FORCES

to the

MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Contact Us

Online:	**www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca**
Secure Online Complaint Form:	**www3.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/ocf_e.php**
Telephone:	1-888-828-3626
Fax:	1-877-471-4447
Mail:	Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces 100 Metcalfe Street, 12th Floor Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1P 5M1
E-mail:	**ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca** (non-confidential information only)

April 30, 2012

The Honourable Peter MacKay, P.C., Q.C., M.P.
Minister of National Defence
National Defence Headquarters
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building
101 Colonel By Drive
13th Floor, North Tower
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K2

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to submit to you *Delivering Results for Canada's Defence Community*, the 2011–2012 Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. This report provides an overview of our activities and operations from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.

Pursuant to paragraph 38(2)(a) of the Ministerial Directives, please be advised that we intend to publish this report on the expiration of 60 days from this date.

Yours truly,

Pierre Daigle
Ombudsman
Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces

Table of Contents

OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE 2

AN OFFICE THAT CAN HELP 4

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: 2011-2012 6

- Individual Cases 6
- Issues of Concern 11

BROADER INVESTIGATIONS 14

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES 18

LOOKING AHEAD 20

OUTREACH 23

OMBUDSMAN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE 28

LIZ HOFFMAN MEMORIAL COMMENDATION FOR COMPLAINT RESOLUTION 30

APPENDIX I — DISPOSITION OF CASES (2011-2012) 32

APPENDIX II — FINANCIAL REPORT 33

Ombudsman's Message

It is my privilege to present the 2011–2012 annual report for the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

The work of our office is closely associated with the stated priority of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces of "care for Canadian Forces and contribution to Canadian society." Indeed, the very presence of an Ombudsman serves to reassure Canadian Forces members, civilian employees, military families and all Canadians that their military operates in an ethical manner, and that fundamental welfare issues will be dealt with fairly.

In the last two years, our office has been heavily engaged in planning, restructuring and transition activities that will see the implementation of a more efficient, effective and responsive service delivery model to ensure that our vision, mission and functions are aligned to the needs of our constituents, who continue to be our *raison d'être*. Expenditures for this office and the work we carry out have been limited to those essential to fulfilling our mandate, and are based on the principle of making judicious use of public funds and ensuring value for money for the Canadian taxpayer.

Carrying out our mandate and delivering on our priorities has also been fraught with challenges due to current economic realities and the need to reduce government spending in order to eliminate the federal deficit. The Strategic and Operating Reviews and the Deficit Reduction Action Plan will provide us with an opportunity over the coming years to sharpen our focus as an innovative, nimble and constituent-focused service provider.

Over the coming year, our office will complete follow-up investigations of previous Ombudsman reports on operational stress injuries and the treatment of injured Reservists. These follow-up investigations will allow us to determine what progress has been made in addressing the past and the issues that were at the forefront when the reports were first made public. We will also be able to confirm what changes were effected and evaluate the progress and improvements put in place following the recommendations stemming from both reports. Finally, these follow-up investigations should be viewed and used as important tools for positioning the Canadian Forces and its leadership for the future with respect to the continued care and treatment of injured Reservists and individuals affected by operational stress injuries.

The Ombudsman's office will also conduct a systemic review regarding the care and treatment of — and, in many respects, the unique reality and burden facing — Canada's military families. I believe Canada's military families are national entities and have a key role to play in maintaining the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Forces. They also sacrifice a great deal for their Canadian Forces loved ones and our country. It is, in many respects, a unique and very challenging life for military families — resulting in frequent moves (often between provinces and away from other loved ones) and periods of uncertainty; prolonged absences of military spouses and parents; significant anxiety as a result of operational deployments; and extra care for Canadian Forces loved ones who may be injured in the course of their service.

At the same time, military families have also evolved quite significantly over the past few decades to include many more working spouses, single parents, gay couples and other family dynamics. Military culture, policies and practices have not always kept pace with these changes, causing difficulties for many military families.

The Minister of National Defence and the Department and the Canadian Forces have put in place a number of initiatives over the past few years aimed at providing more support for Canada's military families. However, even with these programs and initiatives, we have found a number of significant and systemic concerns and complaints that have not been resolved uniformly or consistently across the country, if at all.

We're going to be talking to military families and looking at the care and treatment they have received throughout their experience with the Canadian Forces — from the time their loved ones joined the military, to the initial and ongoing training periods, to the various postings, to the operational deployments, when their military loved ones are injured or killed, and when they leave the Defence community.

We're also going to be looking at whether the Canadian Forces have the appropriate policies, programs and resources in place to properly look after Canada's military families. As we go forward, I hope that any military families who are struggling or experiencing difficulties will come forward to our office so that we can help them and factor their experiences into our broader review.

As I mentioned in last year's annual report, we also intend to pursue a fully independent mandate under the *National Defence Act* by conducting a thorough review of the Ministerial Directives with a view to producing a critical analysis of the operational challenges inherent in these directives, including looking at options to remove the practical hindrances to serving our constituents that currently exist.

The mandate of this office is to contribute to substantial and long-lasting improvements in the welfare of employees of the Department of National Defence, members of the Canadian Forces and the broader Defence community. The Ministerial Directives establish the functions of the office as well as a rudimentary framework for its operations.

Since the creation of the office in 1998, the Ministerial Directives have been implemented and repeatedly tested in the resolution of Ombudsman complaint files. Our experience has demonstrated that there are inherent challenges and contradictions in the Ministerial Directives that have an impact on the office's ability to serve our constituents.

It is interesting to note that each of the individuals appointed to the position of National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman has raised the same issue and called for a legislated mandate as a means of addressing the challenges. Even with these consistent observations, the Ministerial Directives have yet to be reviewed in any comprehensive manner. A review of these directives is overdue.

Overall, I am extremely pleased with the progress and results achieved by our office in 2011–2012, despite the numerous challenges we have had to face. This annual report is so much more than a mere summary of what we've done and what we set out to accomplish — it should be viewed as a tool for Canadian Forces leadership and the Defence community to use in order to assist those under their respective command, as well as to inform all of our constituents about the important work we carry out on their behalf. I look forward to meeting you and hearing from you as my staff and I continue to canvass the country in an effort to make our office and its services better known and, more importantly, to learn how we can serve you best!

Pierre Daigle
Ombudsman

An Office That Can Help

The Office of the Ombudsman was created in 1998 to increase openness and transparency in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, as well as to ensure the fair treatment of concerns raised by Canadian Forces members, departmental employees and their families.

The office acts as a direct source of information, referral and education. It helps members of the Defence community navigate a large and complex organization in order to access existing channels of assistance or redress when they have a complaint or concern.

The office is also responsible for reviewing and investigating complaints from current and former Canadian Forces members, departmental employees, family members and other constituents who believe they have been treated improperly or unfairly by the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Forces.

Ombudsman staff always attempt to resolve complaints informally and at the lowest level possible. However, complaints can also be the subject of thorough investigations, leading to a formal report with findings and recommendations that may be made public.

More broadly, the Ombudsman has a mandate to investigate and make recommendations to improve the overall well-being and quality of life of the members of the Defence community. Investigations from the office have produced substantial and long-lasting improvements in the Canadian Forces, including important changes in the areas of post-traumatic stress disorder and operational stress injuries, and improvements in the treatment received by the families of military members who died during their service to Canada.

Our mission is to bring positive change to the Defence community because we care about the people we serve.

The Ombudsman is independent of the military chain of command and senior civilian management, reporting directly to the Minister of National Defence. The Ombudsman is appointed to the position by the Governor in Council. The office itself derives its authority from Ministerial Directives and their accompanying Defence Administrative Orders and Directives.

The Ombudsman is supported by an office of approximately 55 federal public servants, including investigators, complaint analysts and intake officers with a great deal of knowledge and expertise in military matters. Ombudsman investigators include former police officers, former Canadian Forces members from various ranks and occupations and public servants from across the federal government.

Independent and impartial, we are dedicated to fairness for all.

The Office of the Ombudsman stands ready to help members of the Defence community, including:

- Current and former members of the Canadian Forces (Regular Force and Reservists);
- Current and former employees of the Department of National Defence;
- Current and former members of the Cadets;
- Current and former Non-Public Fund employees;
- Individuals applying to become a member of the Canadian Forces;
- Immediate family members of any of the above-mentioned; and
- Individuals on exchange or secondment with the Canadian Forces.

Members of the Defence community who bring a concern or complaint to the Ombudsman's office can do so without fear of reprisal. In addition, all information obtained by the office during the handling of cases is treated as confidential.

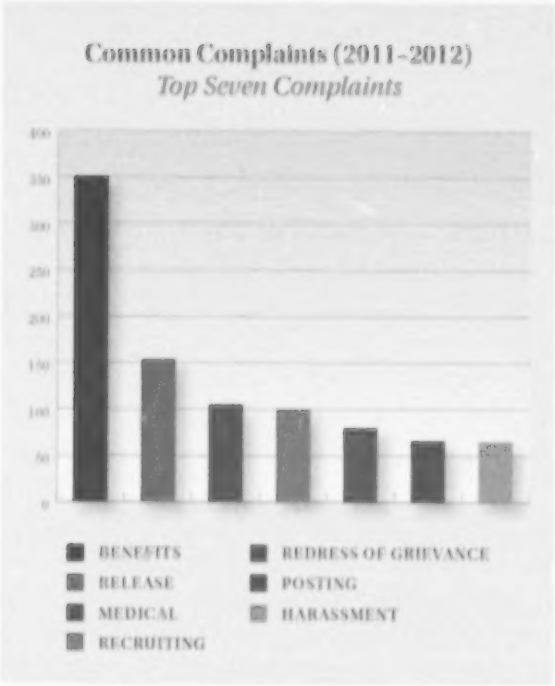
The Year in Review: 2011–2012

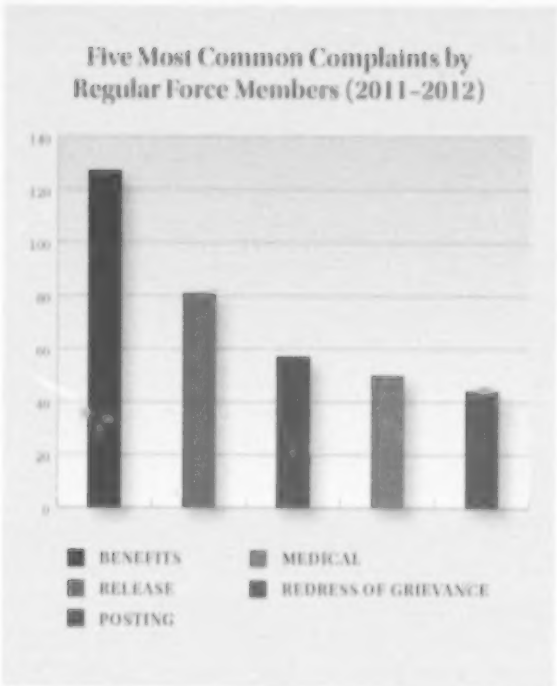
Over the past year, the Office of the Ombudsman delivered real and positive results for Canada's Defence community.

Individual Cases

Throughout 2011–2012, the office received 1,412 new cases from Canadian Forces members, civilian employees, military family members and other constituents. The top seven categories of new cases were related to: **benefits** (including the denial of benefits and the forced repayment of monies by members due to an administrative error); **release from military service** (including members who felt they were being unjustly released and those whose voluntary release requests were delayed); **medical issues** (including inadequate medical treatment and/or follow-up care); **recruiting** (including the unfair rejection of applications and delays in the recruiting process); **redress of grievance** (including delays and the unfair denial of financial compensation); **military postings** (including the denial of compassionate and cost-contingency posting requests); and **harassment** (including abuse of authority).

The Ombudsman's office also assists members of the Defence community with complaints and concerns related to promotions, leave/vacation, access to information, training, disciplinary action and more.



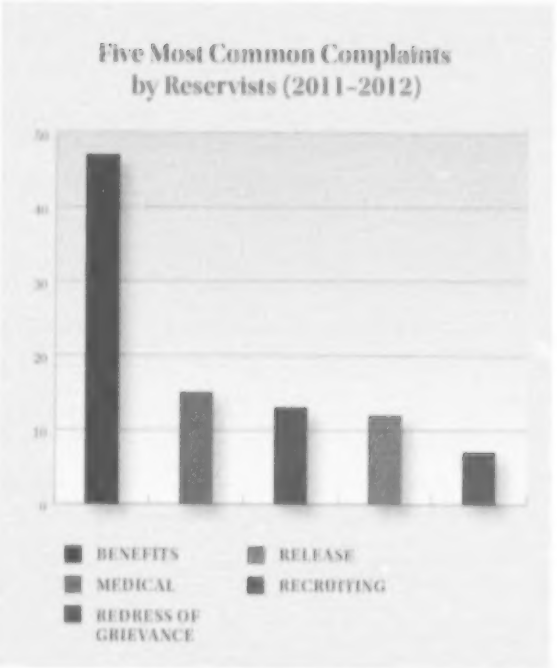


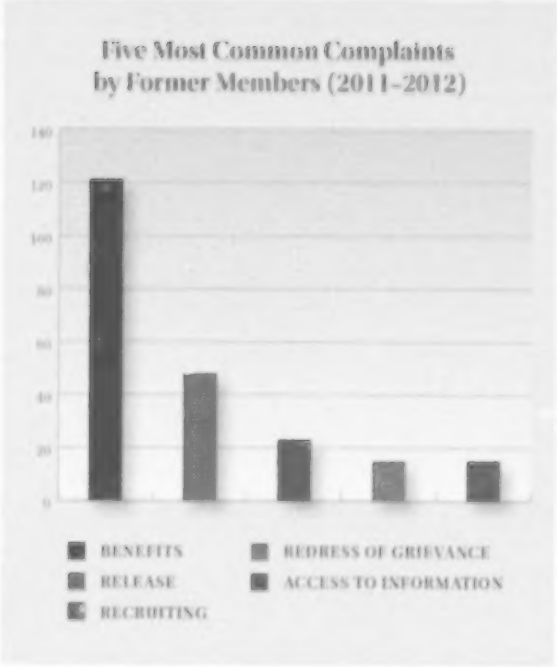
In total, Ombudsman investigators and intake officers handled 1,913 cases in 2011-2012, including new cases (1,412), cases left over from previous years (386), and cases re-opened (115).

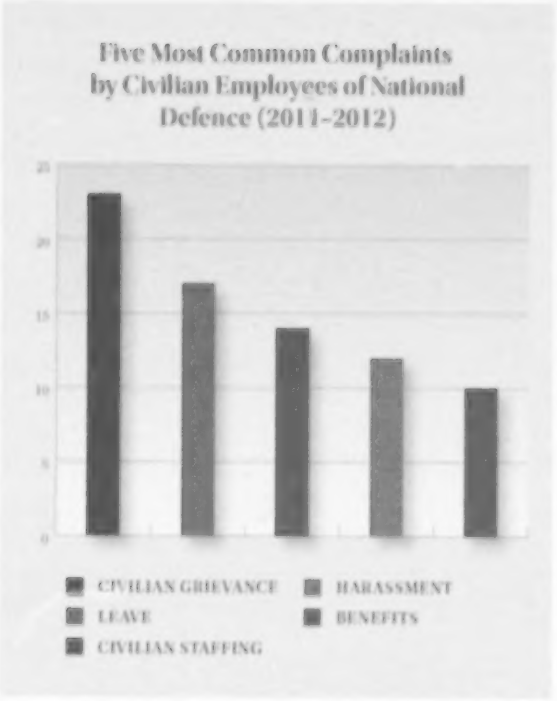
New Complaints by Category (2011-2012)

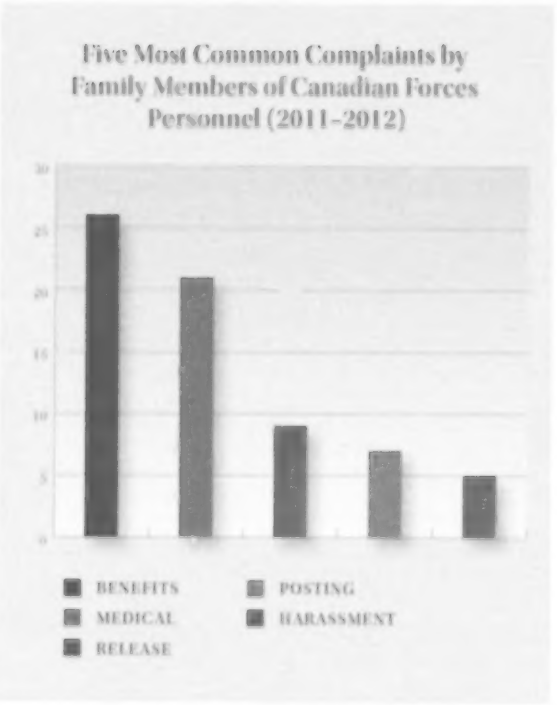
Regular Force	579
Former Military	312
Reserve Force	126
Family Member	115
Civilian Employee	95
Regular Force Applicant	39
Former Civilian Employee	9
Reserve Force Applicant	8
Cadet CIC	6
Cadet	2
Non-Public Fund Employee	4
Non-Constituent	57
Anonymous	53
Own Motion	7
Total New Complaints	**1,412**

As in past years, the majority of new cases were brought to the office by serving and retired members of the Canadian Forces.







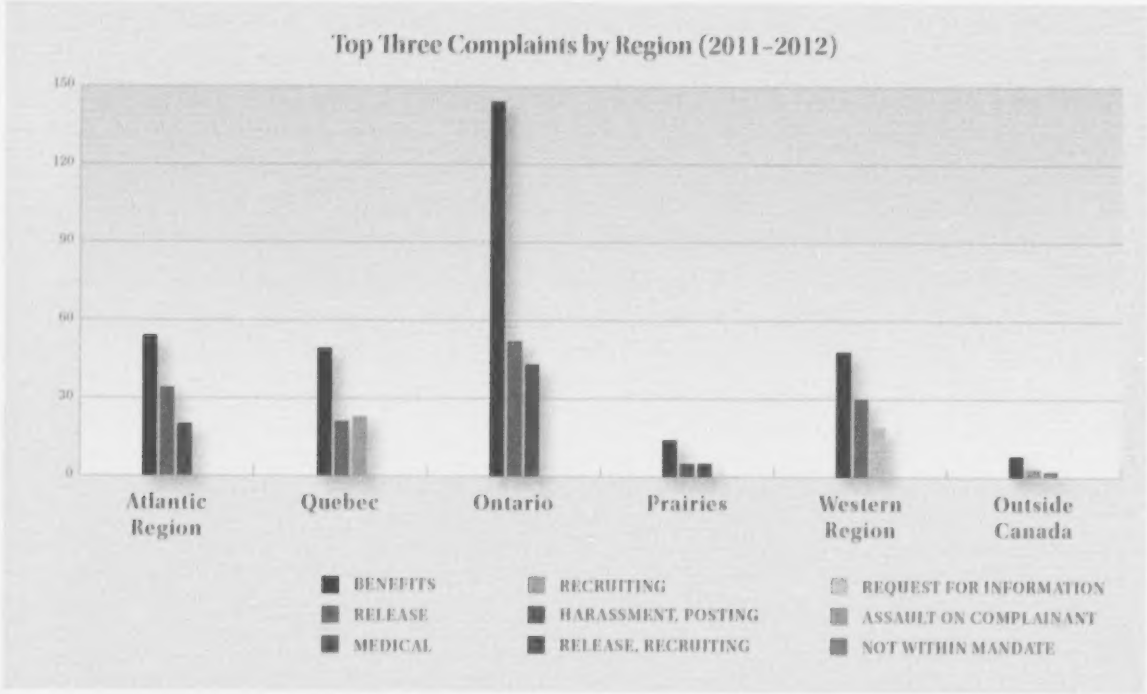


In 2011-2012, the office also received more than 220 cases from civilian members of the Defence community, including employees and former employees of the Department of National Defence, family members of military personnel or civilian employees, and non-public fund employees.

New Complaints by Category (2008-2009 to 2011-2012)

	Fiscal Year			
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Regular Force	449	478	574	579
Former Military	238	263	270	312
Reserve Force	128	165	174	126
Family Member	83	109	144	115
Civilian Employee	47	61	79	95
Regular Force Applicant	20	30	30	39
Former Civilian Employee	17	18	15	9
Cadet CIC			11	6
Cadet	11	11	2	2
Reserve Force Applicant	4	8	8	8
Non-Public Fund Employee	4	7	6	4
Anonymous	4	7	70	53
Non-Constituent	76	46	71	57
Own Motion				7
Total	**1,081**	**1,203**	**1,454**	**1,412**

In 2011-2012, the largest number of new complaints originated in Ontario (536), followed by the Western Region (230), the Atlantic Region (225) and Quebec (209).



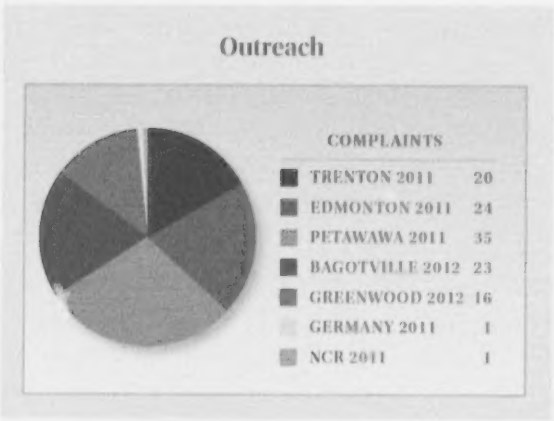
In 2011-2012, concerns related to benefits, release from military service and medical issues were the most prominent across the country.

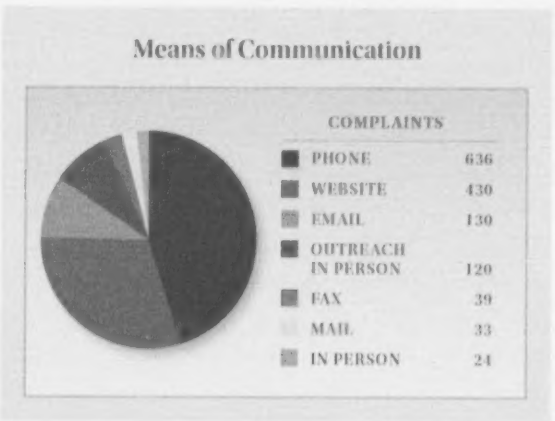
COMPLAINTS SUBMITTED DURING OMBUDSMAN OUTREACH VISITS (2011-2012)

In 2011-2012, the Ombudsman and staff travelled to a number of Canadian Forces bases and received a total of 120 complaints directly from members of the Defence community.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE OFFICE (2011-2012)

Over the past year, the majority of complainants contacted the Ombudsman's office through the Ombudsman's website (including its secure online complaint form) and through the office's toll-free telephone number: 1-888-828-3626. Members of the Defence community also contacted the office by e-mail, letter, fax and in person.





Issues of Concern

DOOR-TO-DOOR MOVES

During his many outreach visits, the Ombudsman has heard from Canadian Forces members across the country that the Integrated Relocation Program is causing a great deal of frustration. Widespread criticism has been focused on the way in which the program is administered and on its restrictions, which are causing significant strain — particularly the door-to-door requirements.

Since 2009, the Canadian Forces has enforced a more rigid application of its policy on door-to-door moves. The result is that stricter conditions must be met to claim Interim Lodging Meals and Incidentals while waiting to take possession of a home. If a member needs more than the basic benefit package or if additional time is required to bridge a gap between home acquisition and disposal dates, the member must demonstrate that "every reasonable effort" was made to move door-to-door, and the member's request to account for any delays must be considered by the Director of Compensation and Benefits Administration. Furthermore, if the request is denied, the only recourse for the member is the grievance process, which is known to be lengthy.

Although the Canadian Forces Integrated Relocation Program provides guidelines for door-to-door moves, it is unclear what is expected by the caveat "every reasonable effort" must be made in order to qualify for additional Interim Lodging Meals and Incidentals. This creates a great deal of confusion and frustration and Canadian Forces members are often left to deal with the consequences of what many perceive to be "uninformed" decisions on their part.

As of March 31, 2012, the formal response to the concerns of the Ombudsman's office was that the existing policy provides the parameters for door-to-door moves and also allows for exceptions. The office will continue to monitor and act upon individual cases that come to its attention as it relates to the application of the door-to-door policy.

HOME EQUITY ASSISTANCE

The Ombudsman's office has received a number of complaints related to financial losses when Canadian Forces members are posted and have to sell their homes in certain areas of the country. After reviewing these complaints, the office has identified serious concerns with the Home Equity Assistance policy within the Canadian Forces Integrated Relocation Program.

When posted, Canadian Forces members can be faced with volatile market conditions, a lack of availability of military housing, limited housing options in the open market, low rental vacancy rates and a short time-frame in which to decide where to live. Many of these circumstances are beyond the control of Canadian Forces members and can have severe and long-lasting financial and personal consequences.

Under the Home Equity Assistance policy, Canadian Forces members are only compensated for the full loss on the sale of a home if it is located in a community where Treasury Board Secretariat, the authority on the government's relocation policy, has determined that the housing market has dropped by more than 20 percent. The Canadian Forces Integrated Relocation Program requires that a military member, who wishes to apply for depressed market status due to a home equity loss, must substantiate his/her case and submit it to the Director of Compensation and Benefits Administration for consideration and possible submission to Treasury Board Secretariat.

When Treasury Board Secretariat renders a positive decision on a case, the Director of Compensation and Benefits Administration applies that decision to all Home Equity Assistance cases for full reimbursement for that same region and that same year. If Treasury Board Secretariat does not recognize the area as a depressed market, only 80 percent of the financial loss is reimbursed, up to a maximum of $15,000. As a result of the Home Equity Assistance policy, a number of Canadian Forces members have incurred significant financial hardship through no fault of their own.

The Chief of the Defence Staff has supported a number of grievances as valid claims for Canadian Forces members' loss of equity as a result of the sale of their home; however, he has no financial authority to reimburse these losses.

The Ombudsman's office is concerned by the financial losses and the resulting distress being placed on military members and their families as a result of relocation. The office will continue to investigate complaints that relate to Home Equity Assistance and submit recommendations as appropriate.

DELAYS WITH CLAIMS AND GRIEVANCES

The Ombudsman's office has received, and continues to receive, a number of complaints regarding extensive delays with the adjudication of claims and grievances related to compensation and benefits. In response to its request for information in April 2012, the Ombudsman's office was informed that there were more than 1,300 claims and over 230 grievances awaiting adjudication or decisions. In most cases, Canadian Forces members have grieved decisions related to the Integrated Relocation Program, Separation Expenses, Imposed Restriction or Post-Living Differential, all of which often involve thousands of dollars and have a direct impact on their financial health and that of their families.

In most cases, Canadian Forces members have waited more than 12 months to receive a decision from the Director General of Compensation and Benefits while *Queen's Regulations and Orders* dictates that the Initial Authority has 60 days to render a decision. As a practice, the Director General of Compensation and Benefits systematically requests several extensions, which significantly delay resolution of financial issues.

The Ombudsman's office raised these concerns with the Chief of Military Personnel in June 2011 and recommended that an action plan be put in place to improve the timeliness in providing decisions on claims and grievances. The office has since confirmed with the Director General of Compensation and Benefits that a framework has been put in place to capture and track claims and grievances. They have also implemented subject matter experts in key areas in order to facilitate the review of claims and grievances submitted on similar issues. These changes seem to have improved their ability to respond to new claims and grievances, but they have not reduced the number of claims and grievances that are backlogged and awaiting decision.

RESERVE FORCE PENSION PLAN

As reported in the Ombudsman's 2010–2011 annual report, the office has received a large number of complaints related to the Reserve Force Pension Plan since that plan came into effect on March 1, 2007. A review of these complaints prompted a preliminary investigation by the office that identified several concerns, including the buy-back program.

On March 1, 2007, over 15,000 Reserve Force members became eligible for benefits under the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act*. During a two year window following the introduction of the Reserve Force Pension Plan, members were provided with the opportunity to submit service elections in order to count prior military service towards their total pensionable service. This window of opportunity was subsequently extended by one year — until February 28, 2011 — to ensure that as many Reserve Force members as possible were able to take advantage of the program.

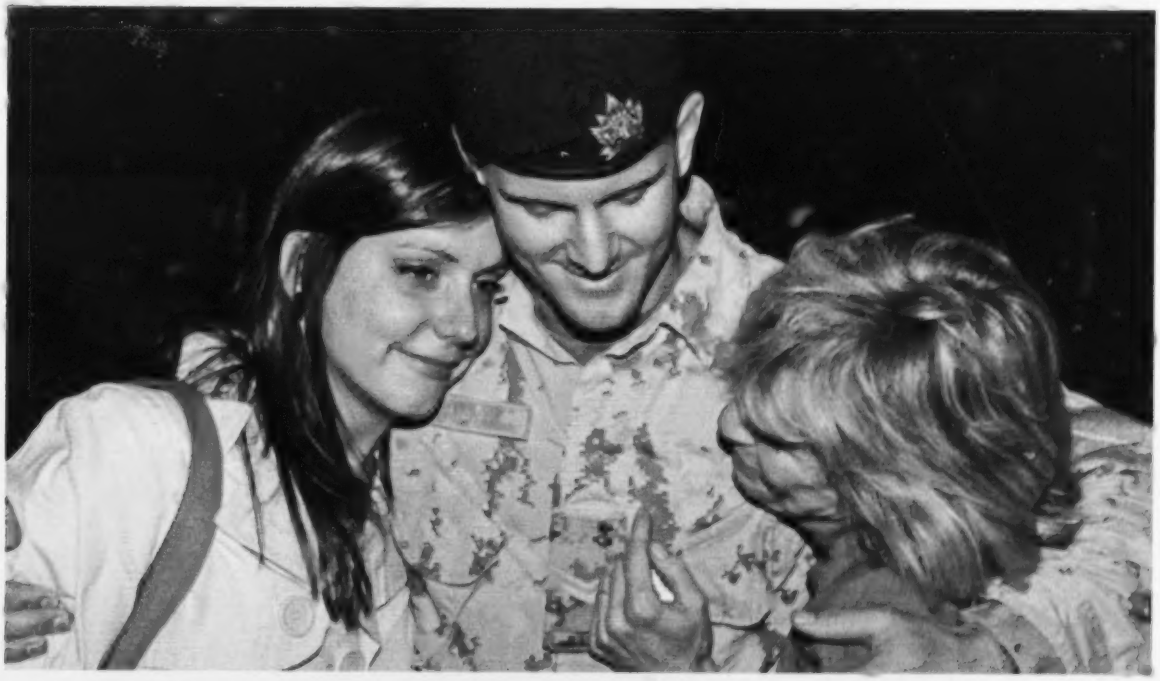
At the end of fiscal year 2010–2011, only 757 of 11,090 service elections had been processed. Moreover, according to forecasts by the Directorate of Canadian Forces Pension Service, the backlog would not be fully addressed until some time after fiscal year 2013-2014.

Following its preliminary investigation, the Ombudsman's office was informed that the Department of National Defence had taken action to address the backlog of service elections and the delays for payment of pension benefits. However, when the office requested an update on the status of the service buy-back processing backlog, it was advised that only 1,321 of 12,201 service elections had been processed as of February 29, 2012, and that the anticipated completion date of all files was now estimated to be December 2017.

Given this most recent update, the office will formally raise its concerns with senior leadership regarding the excessive delays in processing Reserve Force members' buy-back elections.

CIVILIAN CLASSIFICATION GRIEVANCE DELAYS

As the Ombudsman conducts outreach visits to various bases across the country, delays in the classification grievance process and inconsistent classification levels for similar jobs in Ottawa versus the provinces/regions continue to be a strong preoccupation of civilian employees within the Department of National Defence. The Ombudsman's office has received 25 complaints that relate to civilian classification grievances over the past fiscal year.



Pursuant to Section 237 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, regulations were established (effective April 1, 2005) dictating that a written response must be provided to an employee no later than 80 days after the date the classification grievance was presented. This can be extended by written agreement between the parties.

In gathering information related to complaints about the classification grievance process, the office was made aware of general delays and a backlog at the Directorate of Civilian Classification and Organization. Indeed, Ombudsman office enquiries revealed that, as of March 2012, there were approximately 250 classification grievances awaiting hearing, with the oldest pending grievance dating back to 2008. Currently, the 80 day deadline for a written response is not being met (or even close to being met) in any of the files handled by the Directorate of Civilian Classification and Organization.

Although progress has been made to address these grievances in a more timely manner, the Ombudsman intends to meet with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Human Resources Civilian to express his concerns in this matter.

Wading Through Bureaucracy

A former civilian employee of National Defence contacted the Ombudsman's office in 2011 after waiting almost three years for a return of pension contributions. The employee had resigned her position in 2009 and had made a number of attempts to obtain her pension transfer value payment — almost $6,000 — without success.

An Ombudsman complaint analyst made a number of calls on the complainant's behalf and discovered that her file had been delayed because the complainant had been on extended leave over a number of months while at National Defence. That, combined with administrative delays in the two departments administering the payment, had prevented her from receiving her pension transfer value in a timely fashion.

The complaint analyst received assurances that the complainant's file would be expedited. Within a month, the complainant received the money she was owed.

Broader Investigations

As of the end of March 2012, the Office of the Ombudsman initiated and continued to work on a number of broader investigations.

OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

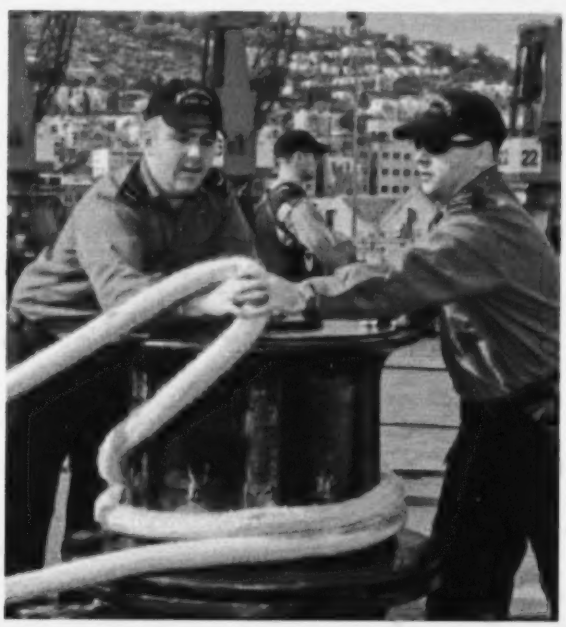
In December 2008, the Ombudsman's office published a second follow-up report, entitled *A Long Road to Recovery: Battling Operational Stress Injuries*, which was intended to track the progress made by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces in implementing the office's 2002 recommendations related to post-traumatic stress disorder and other operational stress injuries. The report also highlighted some new and evolving issues and problems. The overriding aim of the office, however, was to establish whether Canadian Forces members who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder or other operational stress injuries were being diagnosed and getting the care and treatment they needed in order to continue to be contributing members of Canadian society — either within the Canadian Forces or as civilians.

While recognizing that progress had been made by the Canadian Forces to identify and treat military personnel suffering from mental health injuries, the Ombudsman was concerned about the significant impact that the Afghanistan mission was having — and may have well into the future — on Canadian Forces members and their families.

Accordingly, in early 2011, the Ombudsman launched a third follow-up investigation into the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder and other operational stress injuries in the Canadian Forces. The investigation will determine the status of the nine recommendations contained in the 2008 report and the seven recommendations included in the companion report entitled *The State of Mental Health Services at CFB Petawawa*. The investigation will also consider new and evolving concerns, particularly related to base- and wing-level care.

Following the launch of this follow-up investigation, Ombudsman staff conducted more than 200 interviews with over 425 individuals, including senior leaders at National Defence Headquarters and within the Canadian Forces Health Services Group. The investigative team also travelled to Canadian Forces Bases Edmonton, Gagetown, Halifax, Petawawa, Shilo, Trenton, Valcartier and Wainwright in order to meet with medical staff and other caregivers, Integrated Personnel Support Centre staff, Operational Stress Injury Social Support program staff, Military Family Resource Centre staff, unit leadership, Canadian Forces personnel, military families and others. In addition, during their collection of data, the investigative team accumulated and assessed more than 650 documents.

The investigation will be completed and released in the summer of 2012.



FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF THE TREATMENT OF INJURED RESERVISTS

In the spring of 2008, the Ombudsman's office released a special report entitled *Reserved Care: An Investigation into the Treatment of Injured Reservists*. Following an extensive investigation, the Ombudsman found that Reservists who were injured in the course of their duties in Canada faced a host of challenges in accessing timely, adequate and ongoing medical care that Regular Force members did not.

The investigation identified a number of major areas of concern, including significant inequities in the provision of health care to injured Reservists. Overall, the availability and quality of medical care provided to Reservists was found to be largely unpredictable, with some Reservists receiving no medical care at all from the Canadian Forces.

The office also identified significant inequities in the benefits provided to Reservists. For example, certain Reservists were entitled to only 40 percent of the amount of accidental dismemberment benefits available to Regular Force members. Another matter of concern involved inconsistent standards in the areas of periodic health assessments, immunizations, the treatment of injuries resulting from fitness training, and the handling and storage of medical records.

Additionally, investigators found that Reserve units generally lacked the resources and training to conduct the administration they were mandated to perform, resulting in inadequate support to injured Reservists and their families.

In releasing *Reserved Care*, the Ombudsman made 12 recommendations to the Minister of National Defence that were intended to ensure all members of Canada's Reserve Force were treated fairly.

In early 2012, the Ombudsman's office began a follow-up investigation to assess the status of these recommendations and determine if the situation had improved for Canada's injured Reservists. This investigation is expected to be finalized and published in the summer of 2012.

UNFAIRNESS IN THE REDRESS OF GRIEVANCE PROCESS

In May 2010, the Office of the Ombudsman published a special report on the Canadian Forces redress of grievance process, entitled *The Canadian Forces Grievance Process: Making It Right for Those Who Serve*, highlighting deficiencies in the grievance process that are causing further hardship for Canadian Forces members who have already been wronged.

As a result of the investigation, the office found that the redress of grievance process — which is supposed to provide soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen with a quick and informal mechanism to challenge Canadian Forces actions and resolve matters without the need of the courts or other processes — is incomplete, flawed and unfair.

Specifically, it was determined that the Chief of the Defence Staff, who is the final decision-maker in the grievance process, does not have the authority to provide financial compensation to fully resolve unfairness. Instead, when a request for financial compensation arising from a grievance is made, it is a government lawyer — not the Chief of the Defence Staff — who determines if compensation should be paid to the Canadian Forces member. These two processes are completely separate and independent, and government lawyers are not bound by the position taken by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

As a result of the investigation, the Ombudsman concluded that it is necessary that the Chief of the Defence Staff be able to grant financial compensation for the simple reason that, in certain circumstances, fairness cannot be achieved by any other means. Commanders must have the tools and authority to take care of their people, and Canadian Forces members must have confidence that their commanders will take care of them. This is a leadership and morale issue.

Unfortunately, the Department of National Defence has not implemented any of the recommendations from the Ombudsman's 2010 special report.

When the Ombudsman's office requests updates on the status of its recommendations, it is assured that all of the relevant decision-makers agree with the main recommendation — that the Chief of the Defence Staff should be given the power to grant financial compensation within the grievance process. However, as of March 31, 2012, the office was informed that there was still no agreement on how to grant that power.

It has been more than two years since the Ombudsman's report was published, and almost nine years since the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Right Honourable Antonio Lamer, made a similar recommendation to the Minister of National Defence. If there truly is a willingness to repair this fundamental unfairness, as senior departmental officials repeatedly assure the office, the recommendation could be implemented within a few months. So the lack of concrete action, so long after the fact, begs the question of whether this is an attempt to bog things down bureaucratically.

It now falls to the Minister of National Defence to lead the way in implementing the recommendations in the Ombudsman's 2010 special report in a timely manner. Doing so would repair a fundamental unfairness to Canadian Forces members with grievances involving a financial aspect.

A Long Overdue Repayment

A civilian employee of National Defence came to the Ombudsman's office seeking reimbursement for overpayments made to a medical service plan. The employee had unknowingly paid duplicate premiums for over a decade, following her separation from her spouse. As soon as she was made aware of these duplicate payments, the employee notified her compensation advisor who took the appropriate steps to correct the issue. The employee then requested that she be reimbursed for the overpayment. A number of options were explored but no resolution was reached. Finally, after several years of failed attempts to claim her money, the employee turned to the Ombudsman's office.

An Ombudsman investigator evaluated the employee's claim and requested that a formal review of her file be conducted. Two months after the investigator's intervention, the complainant was notified that she was entitled to a reimbursement of five years of overpayments according to the existing policy.

Corporate Priorities and Initiatives

In 2010-2011, the Ombudsman's office undertook a thorough review of its operations with the aim of improving its efficiency and effectiveness. This initiative allowed the office to position itself as an innovative, nimble and constituent-focused service provider and, ultimately, met the Government of Canada's broader initiative to reduce spending and eliminate the federal deficit.

Much of the work undertaken to sharpen the office's focus and deliver on its core mission is underway or has been completed. Resources have been reallocated to support operational priorities and business practices have been reviewed to enable the office to develop operational service standards and implement a portfolio management concept for investigative staff.

As part of the restructuring and transition within the office, the Ombudsman redirected the strategic outreach function to the Communications unit. This will enable the office to better deliver outreach services to targeted constituents and craft appropriate messages and outreach activities for maximum impact. Also, the office will be looking to build on its self-evaluation capacity in order to assess its progress both internally and with constituents and to establish more effective ways to communicate with constituents through the use of social media.

A new case management system, CCM Mercury, was also developed from an existing departmental system to address the internal needs of the Ombudsman's office. CCM Mercury was rolled out at the end of 2010 and an in-house training program was developed so that all employees could use this important tool to manage their case loads. A consultant from the software company has been working with the Ombudsman's office to improve capabilities and programming issues in order to better meet the needs of the office with respect to the tracking of all contacts and cases, as well as to enable the office to better capture the data and generate key statistical assessments and performance reports.

Over the coming fiscal year, the office will build upon the corporate initiatives taken to date, including:

- Enhancing and measuring constituents' awareness and understanding of the office's role and the services that it provides to the Defence community by conducting a minimum of three outreach visits (at the Ombudsman level) across the country.
- Strengthening the office's communications capacity in order to more effectively reach out to constituents and demonstrate the office's value to Canada's Defence community by implementing new social media tools aimed at targeted members of the Defence community; adding additional capacity and expertise in order to take over all aspects of the office's communications services and tools; and overhauling the format of the office's annual report to make it more relevant to constituents, parliamentarians and Canadians.
- Implementing service standards aimed at improving the quality and timeliness of the services provided to individual constituents at all levels of its service delivery process including intake, early resolution and investigation.
- Strengthening the office's capacity to research and proactively collect, analyze and report on trends and systemic issues related to its mandate and bolster the efficiency, effectiveness and overall rigor of its special/own motion investigations.
- Continuing to strengthen the office's ability to capture, assess and report on its performance.
- Focusing on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the office and its operations by: finalizing and implementing the office's human resources plan; updating job descriptions and providing training to address capacity gaps and to improve the office's ability to address the concerns of its constituents; and designing performance measurement standards to establish a baseline for evaluation in outlying years.
- Strengthening Canada's position on the world stage as a leader in the military ombudsman field by co-chairing the International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces in the fall of 2012 in conjunction with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, and working with countries, such as South Africa, who are seeking advice and expertise in establishing their own military ombudsman offices.

The Ombudsman is confident that the ongoing implementation of these priorities will better position the office to deliver on its mandate and provide a more efficient and timely response to Canada's Defence community.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming fiscal year, the Ombudsman's office will continue to focus on achieving real results for the individual members of Canada's Defence community. At the same time, the Ombudsman will undertake two broader initiatives — a comprehensive study of the challenges facing Canadian Forces families across the country and a review of the Ministerial Directives governing the mandate and activities of the Ombudsman's office.

REVIEWING THE SYSTEMIC CONCERNS OF CANADA'S MILITARY FAMILIES

The office's most visible intervention in recent years has been related to the care and treatment of military families who have lost a Canadian Forces loved one while the member was serving their country. The focus on this issue, however, shed light on a number of other concerns that affect the lives of Canada's military families, including operational tempo, operational stress injuries, housing, medical concerns, and social and community support.

Since the Ombudsman's office was established in 1998, more than 1,000 military families have come forward with complaints and concerns (more than 100 over the past 12 months) regarding these and other issues. At the same time, through the Ombudsman's extensive outreach efforts, the office has also encountered and documented dozens of similar complaints from military families across the country.

This is why, in the spring of 2012, the office launched a systemic review into the care and treatment of, and in many respects, the unique reality and burden facing Canada's military families.

Canada's military families are national entities and have a key role to play in maintaining the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Forces. They also sacrifice a great deal for their Canadian Forces loved ones. It is, in many respects, a unique and very challenging life for Canada's military families resulting in frequent moves (often between provinces and away from other loved ones) and periods of uncertainty; prolonged absences of military spouses and parents; significant anxiety as a result of operational deployments; and extra care for Canadian Forces loved ones who may be injured in the course of their military service.

Reflective of broader Canadian society, today's military families have also evolved quite significantly over the past couple of decades to include many more working spouses, single parents, gay couples and other family dynamics. Military culture, policies and practices have not always kept pace with these changes, causing difficulties for many military families.

Helping to Alleviate a Financial Hardship

A retired Regular Force member turned Reservist contacted the Ombudsman's office for assistance in resolving an issue with his pay. While on mandatory leave without pay (required of all Class B Reservists), the Reservist had been advised that his contract would be terminated. At that time, he was told he would be paid for the remainder of his contract, approximately two months salary. The member approached the Ombudsman's office after delays in obtaining his pay began to cause him financial hardship.

An Ombudsman complaint analyst discovered there were issues related to the member's enrolment in the Reserves that contributed to the delays in the distribution of the final payment. The complaint analyst helped to resolve the issues related to the irregular enrolment and the member received the salary that was owed to him.

The Minister of National Defence and the Department and the Canadian Forces have put in place a number of initiatives over the past few years aimed at providing more support for Canada's military families. However, even with these initiatives, the Ombudsman's office has found a number of significant and systemic concerns and complaints that have not been resolved or not resolved uniformly or consistently across the country. At the same time, it is important to recognize that some of the most common and significant concerns are outside of the control and jurisdiction of National Defence and the federal government.

In Canada, the provinces are generally responsible for health care, employment and child care. As a result, some military families — who are being moved throughout Canada by the Canadian Forces — are falling through federal-provincial cracks and are suffering. The office is aware of cases where Canadian Forces members reconsider their military careers in response to the challenging realities faced by their families.

For example, when Canadian Forces members and their families are posted between provinces, many spouses have a great deal of difficulty accessing timely health care and child care. While many Canadians have difficulties finding a family doctor and appropriate care for their children, the problem is even more pronounced for military families who may be moved by the Canadian Forces a dozen or more times over the course of a military career. According to a Canadian Forces Health Services article in the "Lookout" newspaper (January 3, 2012), Canadian Forces families move three times more often than civilian families and are four times less likely to have a family physician. In a country where comprehensive health care coverage is publicly funded, the mobility inherent to the military lifestyle prevents many Canadian military families from accessing primary health care resources and services.

Mobility also poses a problem for military spouses seeking employment. So too does the fact that many provinces do not recognize the credentials or expertise of certain military spouses (e.g., teachers, nurses, etc.) when they are forced to move between provinces.

As part of the office's ongoing review, the mobility policy and procedures of the Canadian Forces will be studied to determine, in particular, if there are any ways from a policy perspective to ease some of the strain on Canada's military families.

The office is also interested in working with provincial ombudsmen from across the country in order to look at best practices and see if some collective recommendations can be put in place to improve the quality of life of Canada's military families. For example, in 2007 and 2008, a number of provinces eliminated the waiting period for health insurance coverage for the dependents of Canadian Forces personnel being posted to those provinces. The office will be looking to foster this type of cooperation in health care and other areas across the country.

As part of the review, the office will also be talking to military families and looking at the care and treatment they have received throughout their experience with the Canadian Forces — from the time their loved ones joined the military, to the initial and ongoing training periods, to the various postings, to the operational deployments, and to when they decide to leave the Defence community.

At the same time, the office will be looking at whether the Canadian Forces have the appropriate policies, programs and resources in place to properly care for Canada's military families.

It is expected that this review will be completed and published in fiscal year 2012–2013.

LEGISLATED MANDATE

When the Ombudsman's office was created in 1998, Ministerial Directives were developed to establish the functions of the office as well as the rudimentary framework for its operations. Since then, the directives have been implemented and repeatedly tested and assessed in the resolution of individual complaints and broader, systemic investigations.

However, over the past number of years, it has become apparent to each of the three appointed Ombudsmen that there are inherent challenges and contradictions in the Ministerial Directives that impact on the office's ability to serve its constituents. Indeed, each Ombudsman has raised his concerns publicly and has called for a legislated mandate as a means of addressing the problems.

Over the next year, the Ombudsman's office will produce a critical analysis of the operational challenges inherent in the Ministerial Directives and will develop options to remove the practical hindrances to serving Canada's Defence community.

Outreach

As part of the office's ongoing outreach initiative aimed at enhancing the overall awareness and understanding of the Ombudsman's role and mandate within the Defence community, the Ombudsman and his staff visited a number of military installations across the country, engaged constituents at military and departmental events, and reached out broadly to military and civilian leaders, stakeholders and like-minded organizations. These visits also provided the Ombudsman and his staff with a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing members of the Defence community.

VISITS TO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

The Ombudsman's office is committed to connecting directly with constituents where they live and work. In this vein, the Ombudsman and his staff travel regularly to Canadian Forces bases and wings where they meet with senior leaders, non-commissioned members of all ranks and occupations, family members, health care providers, chaplains, social workers and civilian employees. These sessions are meant to provide information on the office's services, to discuss issues of importance and to receive and document complaints. In 2011–2012, the Ombudsman and his staff travelled to a number of Canadian Forces bases, including:

- Greenwood (Nova Scotia) on March 26 to 30, 2012, interacting with 345 constituents and receiving 16 individual complaints;
- Bagotville (Quebec) on January 30 to February 3, 2012, meeting more than 420 constituents and receiving 23 individual complaints;
- Trenton (Ontario) on November 28 to December 2, 2011, engaging nearly 300 constituents and receiving 20 individual complaints;
- Petawawa (Ontario) on September 19 to 23, 2011, meeting with 750 constituents and receiving 35 individual complaints;
- Edmonton (Alberta) on June 13 to 17, 2011, engaging 570 constituents and receiving 24 individual complaints; and
- Geilenkirchen (Germany) on April 11 and 12, 2011, meeting with Canadian Forces members of all ranks and occupations, civilian employees, military family members, and support staff (including Military Family Resource Centre staff) and receiving one individual complaint.

A number of common concerns emerged from the Ombudsman's outreach visits in 2011–2012, most notably the significant impact that the high operational tempo was having on Canadian Forces members, their families and military caregivers. Following meetings and town hall sessions with more than 2,000 members of Canada's Defence community, it was apparent that the cumulative impact of operational deployments, military exercises and training is having a significant effect on military personnel, leaving little time for family obligations and straining personal relationships. Caregivers in Petawawa noted that the stress caused by repeated absences has led to an increase in marital breakdowns and family violence. In Trenton, the Ombudsman was informed that 8 Wing personnel were being deployed more frequently for shorter periods of time. Given that it generally takes a Canadian Forces member anywhere from two to six weeks to reintegrate into the family, the shorter and more frequent deployments seem to be having a negative impact on Trenton's military families.

The high operational tempo and difficult mission in Afghanistan have also created a serious strain on Canadian Forces members and the military health care system. In Petawawa, Ombudsman investigators were told that Canadian Forces members seeking treatment for an operational stress injury had to wait several weeks or even months to receive appropriate care. Ombudsman investigators were also informed that the wait

Working for a Compassionate Solution

A Regular Force member contacted the Ombudsman's office for help while waiting for a response to a compassionate posting request. She was on sick leave and waiting to be placed on a permanent medical category until she could be released medically from the Canadian Forces. The complainant's spouse had recently been posted and the Canadian Forces — concerned with splitting up the family — was in the process of posting the complainant to the same location. While needing to continue her treatment at her current posting, the complainant's child also required special support for a severe learning disability and moving would have put the child's academic success at risk.

After contacting the office, the member received notice that her request to remain at her current location had been denied. During a review of the case, an Ombudsman complaint analyst discovered that critical information was missing and other pertinent information had been misinterpreted. The complaint analyst contacted the member's superiors and, after the analyst's intervention and persistence, the Directorate of Military Careers agreed to review the file with the new information and the member's compassionate status request was approved. With the posting message cancelled, the member was able to focus on her health and the needs of her family.

time in Petawawa for a Canadian Forces member with an operational stress injury to be posted to the Integrated Personnel Support Centre could be as long as eight months. In Edmonton, the Ombudsman was told that the substance abuse rate for those with an operational stress injury was high and that addiction counselling services had not kept pace with that reality. Ombudsman investigators were also informed that the Integrated Personnel Support Centre in Edmonton was holding 150 injured military members and that there were in excess of 100 injured members waiting to be posted to it. In both Edmonton and Petawawa, Ombudsman investigators heard that a serious shortage of caregivers was affecting the quality and timeliness of care that could be provided to Canadian Forces members in need, as well as creating a great deal of strain on the caregiver community itself. In Gagetown, Ombudsman investigators were told that medical personnel were very concerned about their ability to fill key medical and administrative support positions and that these challenges were limiting the ability of medical staff to provide the most efficient, direct service to Canadian Forces members.

During his outreach visits, the Ombudsman also heard from Canadian Forces members across the country that the Integrated Relocation Program was causing a great deal of frustration. Ombudsman investigators were told in town hall meetings with military members in Bagotville, Edmonton, Gagetown and Trenton that the way in which the program is administered and its restrictions are causing a significant strain — particularly the door-to-door requirements and the quality of service provided to Canadian Forces members.

Canadian Forces members from various bases were also concerned about the financial losses they were incurring during the sale of their homes after being posted to another location in Canada. In many cases, the losses exceeded the reimbursement paid by the Home Equity Allowance program and created considerable emotional and financial hardship for the entire family.

Housing concerns have been raised with the Ombudsman by all members of the Defence community across the country over the past several years. In Edmonton last year, Canadian Forces members from all ranks complained about difficulties in finding or selling homes in the area. They also expressed concerns about the limited Canadian Forces housing available on the base and were frustrated with the old and inadequate conditions of some of the existing military housing.

At the same time, in Bagotville, the Defence community commented very positively on base accommodations. The Ombudsman was told that families feel safe and have found that housing repairs, when required, are undertaken quickly and professionally.

Through his outreach visits, the Ombudsman also heard a large number of complaints from Canadian Forces members related to benefits. In Edmonton and Petawawa, Canadian Forces members were concerned about the future of the Land Duty Allowance. Ombudsman investigators were informed by many soldiers that it would be difficult to make ends meet with a reduction or elimination of this allowance. In Gagetown, Canadian Forces members were frustrated that they did not qualify for the Land Duty Allowance. The general consensus was that, although Gagetown was not designated as a field unit, the members there spend a significant amount of time in the field and should get access to the allowance. Ombudsman investigators also heard a number of complaints from Canadian Forces members who did not qualify for the Post-Living Differential, who believed that the rate of compensation should be increased, or who feared for the future of this benefit.

The most common concern of National Defence employees across the country was related to the classification system; in particular, individuals felt that they were under-classified in their jobs. Many also expressed their frustration with the lengthy delays in the classification grievance process. At the same time, civilian employees at all of the bases and wings visited by the Ombudsman were deeply concerned over the possibility of future job cuts as a result of the government's broader Deficit Reduction Action Plan.

At every outreach visit, the Ombudsman and his staff met with the director and staff of the local Military Family Resource Centre and, in a town-hall setting, with military family members. Over the past year, the Defence community across the country discussed with the Ombudsman a number of challenges associated with changing family dynamics, including the impact on careers and postings of single parent families, joint custody arrangements, and court-ordered rulings imposed on military families. A number

of military members and families were frustrated that Canadian Forces policies and practices have not kept pace with modern family realities.

The most common concern raised by military families in Gagetown, Petawawa and Trenton was the difficulty many experienced in getting access to family doctors, particularly in the months following a posting. The problem was most pronounced in Petawawa, where the Ombudsman was informed of an overall lack of health care practitioners and services available in Renfrew County.

At the same time, the Ombudsman was encouraged to learn that some military bases were being proactive in addressing this health care challenge. For example, in Trenton, the Ombudsman was informed that there are two family doctors working at a medical clinic located on the base and that there was an effort underway to add a third doctor who is female and bilingual. In Bagotville, the Ombudsman heard that a base doctor had taken the initiative to submit a project to provincial authorities allowing him to offer health care services to military family members, and that the Military Family Resource Centre is assisting this endeavour by providing office space and administrative help.

During every outreach visit over the past fiscal year, military families also expressed their frustration regarding a shortage of suitable child care options, particularly options that recognized and understood the unique challenges facing the children of Canadian Forces personnel. In Bagotville, families also raised with the Ombudsman the problems they were experiencing in finding appropriate child care and access to services for children with special needs.

Given the numerous concerns raised about the challenges associated with child care, Ombudsman investigators were pleased to hear that the Military Family Resource Centre in Trenton had implemented a 'hotel model' approach to its daycare services with flexible payment options — paying for time used rather than paying for full months of care.

In Gagetown, Petawawa and Trenton, the Ombudsman also heard from military spouses who had or were having difficulties finding employment at or around the military base, mainly as a result of frequent postings. In Gagetown, a number of unilingual military spouses claimed that it was nearly impossible to find employment in that bilingual province. In Bagotville and elsewhere, military spouses also expressed their significant frustration in getting provincial recognition of their professional competencies and credentials.

All of the issues raised by military families during the Ombudsman's outreach visits will factor prominently into the office's ongoing systemic review of the care and treatment of — and, in many respects, the unique reality and burden facing — Canada's military families.

Planning is currently underway for Ombudsman visits to Canadian Forces Bases Borden, Cold Lake and St-Jean in fiscal year 2012-2013.

INTERACTING WITH CONSTITUENTS AT DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS

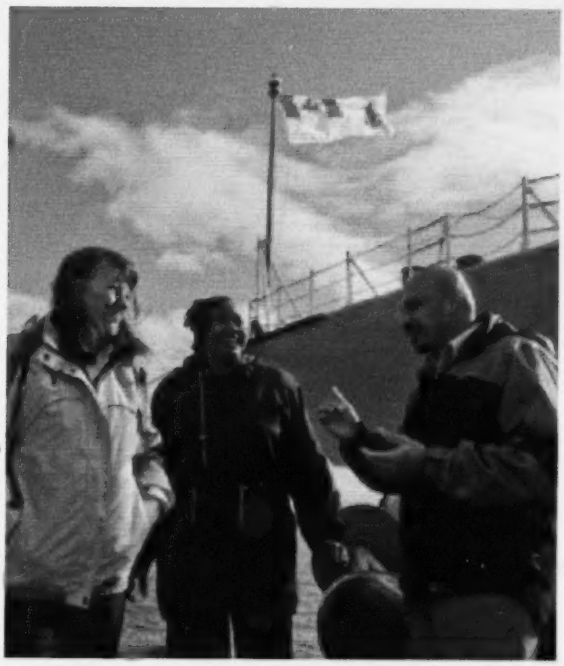
Over the course of 2011-2012, the Ombudsman's office participated in several outreach events in the National Capital Region, meeting with constituents and increasing the organization's visibility. Office staff took part in the following functions:

- International Women's Day (March 8, 2012), meeting with 160 constituents;
- National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman Awareness Campaign (January 17, 2012, October 25 and 27, 2011), meeting with over 500 people;
- International Day for Persons with Disabilities (December 2, 2011), meeting with more than 40 constituents;
- International Conflict Resolution Day (October 20, 2011), meeting with 50 people;
- Islamic History Month (October 12, 2011), meeting with 30 constituents;
- Aboriginal Awareness Week (May 27, 2011), meeting with 25 people;
- Asian Heritage Month (May 12, 2011), meeting with 60 constituents; and
- Employee Assistance Program Awareness Week (May 9, 2011), meeting with 100 constituents.

In order to ensure that newly hired departmental employees are acquainted with the services provided by the Ombudsman's office, the outreach team also participates at monthly orientation sessions for new civilian members of the Defence community.

Would you like someone from the Ombudsman's office to speak to your group/organization?

E-mail the details of your request to: ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca or call 1-888-828-3626.



MR-Civ Diversity and Well-Being

FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEADERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER OMBUDSMAN ORGANIZATIONS

In order to foster and maintain constructive working relationships, the Ombudsman often meets with military and civilian leadership to discuss issues of importance and concerns brought forward by constituents. In addition to meeting with the Minister of National Defence, the Ombudsman and other office staff attended a number of meetings with senior leaders, including the Deputy Minister of National Defence, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of Military Personnel and the Surgeon General.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

International outreach provides the Ombudsman's office with the opportunity to help advance issues of fairness and human rights for armed forces personnel — an area in which Canada is widely recognized as a world leader.

In September and November of 2011, the office hosted a delegation of South African officials in order to provide advice and expertise in establishing their own ombudsman's office for their armed forces personnel.

The Ombudsman also participated in the Third International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces in Belgrade, Serbia, in April 2011. At the 2010 conference in Vienna, the Ombudsman was asked, and subsequently agreed, to co-host this international gathering in Canada. This prestigious conference will be held in Ottawa, Ontario, in September 2012, marking the first time the conference will be held in North America. The office expects participation from an estimated 50 countries for the 2012 conference, with delegates from Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces is one of the world's leading institutions in the areas of security sector reform and governance, and it co-chairs this annual conference, which began in Germany in 2009. The purpose of the conference is to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned related to the protection and promotion of the welfare and rights of armed forces personnel amongst military ombudsman institutions from around the world. More information on this forum is available at **http://icoaf.org.**

Ombudsman's Advisory Committee

The Ombudsman's Advisory Committee consists of volunteers with specialized expertise in military matters and/or comprehensive knowledge of the ombudsman profession. The committee provides the Ombudsman with advice related to the mandate, professional principles and structure of the office.

Back Row (L–R): Chief Warrant Officer J.W. Dalke, Mr. Howard Sapers, Mr. Pierre Daigle, Lieutenant-Colonel John Conrad and Commander Brigitte Boutin. **Front Row:** Ms. Annie Vaillancourt, Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Dawson, Ms. Gaynor Jackson and Ms. Brenda Ebear.

In May and October 2011, the committee met in Ottawa to discuss a number of the broader issues facing the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, including: the care and treatment of injured members of the Canadian Forces; current and anticipated challenges confronting the Canadian Forces health care system; difficulties facing Canada's military families; problems and concerns associated with the military mobility policy and process; and the ongoing and anticipated impact of operational stress injuries on the Canadian Forces and Canadian Forces members.

At the May 2011 meeting, the Ombudsman's Advisory Committee bid farewell to two long-standing members. Ms. Colleen Calvert, the Executive Director of the Halifax and Region Military Family Resource Centre, provided the committee with more than six years of dedicated service. During that time, Ms. Calvert supplied the Ombudsman and committee members with a wealth of knowledge and expertise and served as an outstanding champion for military families.

Commander Baxter Park served as a member of the committee for more than five years, the first Military Chaplain to do so. During his time on the committee, Commander Park shared his unique perspective on the many challenges facing Canada's Defence community and was an invaluable sounding board for initiatives and recommendations being considered by the Ombudsman and the office, particularly those related to the military caregiver community.

Ms. Brenda Ebear, the first civilian employee to sit as a member of the committee, also departed the committee in October 2011. Ms. Ebear first came to the attention of the office in 2007 when she received what was, at that time, the Ombudsman's Special Recognition Award for her initiative and profound interest in the quality of life of 4 Wing (Cold Lake) personnel. Ms. Ebear's insight into the issues and challenges facing civilian employees was tremendously beneficial to the Ombudsman and all members of the advisory committee.

At the end of March 2012, the Ombudsman's Advisory Committee consisted of the following individuals:

- Commander Brigitte Boutin is the Formation Comptroller for Maritime Forces Atlantic (MARLANT) in Halifax.
- Lieutenant-Colonel John Conrad is a published author, lecturer and a Reserve Commanding Officer with 28 years of experience in the Canadian Forces. In 2006, he served as Commanding Officer of the Canadian Logistics Battalion, the unit responsible for sustaining the Canadian Task Force in Southern Afghanistan.
- Chief Warrant Officer J.W. Dalke enrolled in the Canadian Forces as a Supply Technician and has served in a variety of positions throughout Canada. Currently, he is the Chief Warrant Officer for 2 Canadian Air Division in Winnipeg.
- Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Dawson is the Director of Chaplain Services in Ottawa. Since joining the Canadian Forces in 1989, she has served in numerous chaplain positions, including: Chapel Life Coordinator, Unit Chaplain, Base Chaplain, Brigade Chaplain and Formation Chaplain.
- Ms. Gaynor Jackson is the Executive Director of the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre. She has worked in a variety of roles within the organization over the past 23 years, including: front-line social worker, community developer, educator, fundraiser and administrator.
- Mr. Howard Sapers was appointed as Correctional Investigator of Canada in 2004. He has a strong background in corrections, rehabilitation of offenders and crime-prevention gained through employment and community service. He has also authored several publications and a number of articles regarding the role and principles of ombudsmanry. Mr. Sapers serves as the committee chair.
- Ms. Annie Vaillancourt is on the Board of Directors of the Valcartier Military Family Resource Centre and is the spouse of a Canadian Forces member. Ms. Vaillancourt has been a member of the Defence community for over ten years.
- Mr. Bill Tanner is a Second World War veteran and an honorary member of the committee.

Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation for Complaint Resolution

(L-R): Associate Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Julian Fantino, Dr. Andrea Hoffman, Ms. Louise Cassidy, Lieutenant-Colonel Sean Lewis, Master Warrant Officer Anna Aldrich, Vice-Admiral Bruce Donaldson and Ombudsman Pierre Daigle.

The *Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation for Complaint Resolution* is awarded annually to recognize Canadian Forces members, civilian employees and family members who have gone the extra mile and exceeded expectations in helping their colleagues resolve a difficult problem or in bringing about positive and lasting change to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

At a special ceremony held in Ottawa on October 18, 2011, the Ombudsman honoured three members of Canada's Defence community with commendations. The Associate Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Julian Fantino, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Bruce Donaldson, and a number of parliamentarians were present to recognize these outstanding members of the Defence community.

Information on the commendations can be found on the office's website at:
www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca.

Recipients of the 2011 *Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation for Complaint Resolution*

Master Warrant Officer Anna Aldrich

Committed to resolving conflict informally, quickly and effectively, Master Warrant Officer Aldrich was instrumental in addressing an inordinate number of grievances and harassment complaints within her diverse workplace and in creating a positive environment with improved morale and productivity. On her own initiative, she sought out additional training in conflict resolution for herself and her subordinates in order to ensure that all staff had numerous avenues through which to pursue and resolve their concerns. A proponent of open communication, visibility and accessibility at 1 Dental Unit Detachment Edmonton, Master Warrant Officer Aldrich often has one-on-one and group discussions, acting as a mediator and facilitator, with the goal of finding innovative and collaborative solutions to workplace conflict. As a result of her proactive leadership, she established and continues to promote a healthy environment free of serious complaints since 2007.

Ms. Louise Cassidy

As the voluntary chair of a continuous improvement committee called IQ Force at CFB Esquimalt, Ms. Cassidy demonstrated a passion for resolving problems and bringing about improvements to her workplace. She has proposed and established innovative solutions for the gathering and sharing of employee concerns and suggestions, the most important of which were the 2009 and 2010 surveys that gave a positive voice to more than 190 base employees. Spending countless hours of her own time to bring about lasting change at Base Logistics, she was a catalyst in her organization's achievement of the National Quality Institute's first level in the Progressive Excellence Program. Ms. Cassidy's commitment to identifying and resolving problems and her success in driving organizational change are an excellent example of how one individual can help create a healthier and happier workplace for everyone.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sean Lewis

A dynamic leader committed to building a cohesive and effective workplace, Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis always strives to create an environment where conflict is managed in a productive manner, making people feel heard and valued as members of an extraordinary team doing extraordinary work. Nowhere was this more evident than Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis' contribution to the successful completion of 8 Wing Mission Support Unit operations as part of the Afghanistan mission in 2010. As a result of an unexpected deployment to Haiti, this diverse unit had very little time to complete its training requirements before leaving for Camp Mirage. Through his determined efforts, however, Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis managed to ensure that ninety-five percent of the unit received alternate dispute resolution training, more than doubling the rate of training received by previous deployments. The benefit of this instruction exceeded expectations and helped to ensure the successful completion of the unit's mission, including the herculean task of closing and moving Camp Mirage.

Appendix I — Disposition of Cases (2011–2012)

Total Cases Handled	**1,913**
New Cases	1,412
Cases Carried Over From Previous Fiscal Years	386
Cases Re-opened	115
Status of Cases Handled	**1,913**
Cases Closed (2011-2012)	1,471
Cases in Progress (as of March 31, 2012)	442
Cases Closed at Intake	**1,182**
Information or Assistance Provided	751
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	197
Withdrawn	102
Abandoned	90
Outside Mandate	42
Cases Closed in Complaint Resolution	**128**
Informal Resolution	53
Information or Assistance Provided	52
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	11
Withdrawn	8
Abandoned	2
Outside Mandate	2
Cases Closed at the Systemic Investigation Level	**2**
Investigated / Follow Up Required	1
Investigated / No Follow Up Required	1
Cases Closed at Investigation	**159**
Investigated / No Follow Up Required	70
Information or Assistance Provided	33
Investigated / Follow Up Required	17
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	13
Informal Resolution	12
Withdrawn	7
Outside Mandate	6
Abandoned	1

Appendix II — Financial Report

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

In 2011–2012, the expenditures of the Office of the Ombudsman totalled just over $4.3 million, of which $3.7 million was related to salaries.

Mail and courier services	$3,191
Supplies/furniture	$32,135
Training and professional dues	$65,881
Acquisition/rental office equipment	$10,706
Network maintenance and support	$50,766
Telecommunications & IT connections	$71,754
Travel and transportation	$131,069
Communications & public outreach	$49,105
Professional & special services	$256,170
Salaries	$3,666,110
Total	**$4,336,887**